



## U.S. Department of Justice

### Criminal Division

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### **THE PATRIOT ACT SHOULD MATTER TO OKLAHOMANS**

By Acting Assistant Attorney General John C. Richter

We have all seen the devastation caused by acts of terrorism. Congress enacted new laws in the wake of two of the worst tragedies in U.S. history – the Oklahoma City bombing on April 19, 1995, and the al Qaeda terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 – to help law enforcement detect and disrupt any terrorist threat to our citizens. From firsthand experience as a federal prosecutor, I can tell you that we need these laws. They have made our country safer while preserving the civil liberties that we, as Americans, hold so dear.

As part of the Oklahoma team tasked with responding to the September 11 attacks, I saw national security issues facing this state that make renewal this year of the USA PATRIOT Act so critical. As we now know from his guilty plea, Zacarias Moussaoui was hand-picked by Usama Bin Laden to come to the United States to be part of a conspiracy to use an airplane as a weapon of mass destruction. Moussaoui completed a portion of his flight training here in Oklahoma, and had at least one associate in the state.

Of course, since 9/11, threats from international terrorism have not been unique to Oklahoma. My current responsibilities include supervising the Counterterrorism Section at the Justice Department. I see the threats and the accompanying investigations from a national perspective. We have charged over 375 defendants with offenses arising from international terrorism investigations and have obtained more than 200 convictions. In so doing, however, the Justice Department has constantly been challenged to know more to ensure that we do not miss a lead or fail to connect a dot in the effort to prevent and disrupt would-be terrorists. I see how all the law enforcement and intelligence tools of the PATRIOT Act remain indispensable to doing our best in this fight. And, of course, I see how hardworking public servants, each of whom has taken an oath to uphold the Constitution and *all* the laws of the United States, work every day to protect us while ensuring that our civil liberties remain intact.

These tools protect us not only from international threats but also from domestic predators. For example, recently a woman in Missouri, who was eight months pregnant, was found strangled in her home. Her unborn daughter had been cut from her womb and was missing. Police officers found an exchange from an Internet message board between the victim and someone calling herself Darlene Fischer. She asked the victim for directions to her house to meet on the same day the murder occurred. Using Section 212 of the USA PATRIOT Act, federal law enforcement authorities were able to trace Fischer's messages to a server in Kansas, find her email address, and then trace it to her house. Fischer, whose real name turned out to be Lisa Montgomery, was arrested and subsequently confessed. The baby girl was found alive less than 24 hours after her mother had been found murdered.

This is but one of many compelling examples. Other tools in the Act have been used to obtain records of electronic communications to take down large rings of child molesters, to respond to a bomb threat at a high school, and to respond to a threat to burn down a mosque.

Since 1870, the Department of Justice has stood as a bulwark against criminals and threats within our borders while upholding the civil liberties we all hold dear. With the real international and domestic security threats we face today, we need these PATRIOT Act tools. Renewed, this Act, free of conjecture and hyperbole, will serve the American people well. As Oklahomans who have seen the devastation of terrorism unchecked firsthand, I urge your support of the PATRIOT Act.

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